

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GABORO 01269 181902Z

41

ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 FBIE-00 SY-02 SCA-01 SCS-01 L-01

INR-05 CIAE-00 /029 W
----- 025474

P R 181545Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7038
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1269

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2 IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMIN
TAGS: CASC, PFOR, PINS, BC, RH, SA
SUBJECT: CONVICTED AMCITS -BELISARIO, JOSEPH THOMAS AND
ACHESON, CRAIG C.

REF: A) GABORONE 1258; B) GABORONE 1245

DEPARTMENT PASS FBI; PRETORIA FOR RSO

1. AT BELISARIO'S REQUEST, EMBOFF WAS PRESENT AT SEPTEMBER 17
MEETING DURING WHICH BELISARIO HAD PROMISED TO GIVE SPECIAL
BRANCH (SB) AND CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION (CID) COMPLETE
DETAILS OF HIS AND ACHESON'S MOVEMENTS AND CONTACTS IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA. HOWEVER, INFORMATION GIVEN AT LENGTHY SESSION ESSENTIALLY
SAME AS AMENDED STORY HE HAD GIVEN SB AND CID ON
SEPTEMBER 16 AFTER THEY CONFRONTED HIM WITH INFORMATION ABOUT
HIS ACTIVITIES IN RHODESIA (I.E. CONTACTS WITH RHODESAIN SPECIAL
BRANCH, RHODESAIN ARMY RECRUITERS, ETC). BELISARIO INSISTED
THAT HE WAS NOT ON "MISSION" IN BOTSWANA FOR ANYONE BUT WAS
ENROUTE TO SOUTH AFRICA AND U.S. AFTER TURNING DOWN TERMS
OF EMPLOYMENT OFFERED BY RHODESIAN ARMY. NONE OF THE
ISSUES IN PARA 1 OF REF A WERE RAISED BY BELISARIO IN MEETING.
HOWEVER, LATER HE TOLD EMBOFF IN PRIVATE THAT WAS UNABLE TO
SUPPLY DETAILS OF WHAT HE WAS "REALLY" DOING IN BOTSWANA,
PRESUMABLY BECAUSE OF HIS IMPLIED TIES IN PARA 1 REF A.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GABORO 01269 181902Z

2. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION AFTER MEETING, SB AND CID OFFICERS CONFIDED TO EMBOFF THAT THEY STILL CONVINCED BELISARIO AND ACHESON ON "MISSION" IN BOTSWANA, PROBABLY AT BEHEST OF RHODESIAN SPECIAL BRANCH AS WAY OF PROVING THEMSELVES WORTHY POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES. SB SURMISED THAT AMCITS MIGHT HAVE BEEN TRYING TO PINPOINT LOCATION OF REFUGEE CAMPS, GAIN INFORMATION ON MOVEMENTS ACROSS BOTSWANA-RHODESIA BORDER, OR TARGET RHODESIAN REFUGEES FOR KIDNAPPING (A WELL-KNOWN REFUGEE WAS KIDNAPPED FROM NORTHERN BOTSWANA INTO RHODESIAN IN 1974).

3. SB EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER EASE WITH WHICH BELISARIO AND ACHESN OBTAINED SOUTH AFRICAN PERMIETS TO BUY FIREARMS AFTER THEIR RETURN FROM SALISBURY. CID STATED THAT IS IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR NON-SOUTH AFRICAN RESIDENT TO PURCHASE FIREARM IN SOUTH AFRICA AND IS CONVINCED THAT "WAY WAS EASED" FOR AMCITS AFTER SALISBURY TRIP.

4. SB ALSO STATED TO EMBOFF THAT BELISARIO HAD FAILED TO MENTION THAT HE AND ACHESON HAD FLOWN TO AFRICA WITH TWO OTHER AMERICANS, RICHAR CILENTI (PHONETIC SPELLING), AGE 30-35 OF OHIO AND JOSEPH DEMPSEY, AGE 25-30. ACCORDING TO SB, CILENTI AND DEMPSEY ALSO RENTED VEHICLE IN JOHANNESBURG, DROVE TO RHODESIA, AND REDEZVOUSED WITH BELISARIO AND ACHESON IN FRANCISTOWN, BOTSWANA DURING WEEKD OF SEPTEMBER 8.

5. BELISARIO FILLED IN MANY DETAILS PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN TO EMBASSY. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE FOUNDED VOLUNTEER VETERANS FOR VIETNAM (VVV) IN WASHINGTON IN APRIL 1975 TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS TO FIGHT IN VIETNAM. HE ESTIMATED THAT VVV HAS ABOUT 25 - 35 MEMBERS. BELISARIO STATED THAT HE IS WEALTHY AND SPENT SEVERAL THOUSAND DOLLARS OF OWN FUNDS TO SET UP OFFICE, PURCHASE STATIONERY, ETC. VIETNAM FELL BEFORE PLANS COULD GET UNDER WAY AND BELISARIO BEGAN LOOKING FOR NEW PLACE TO FIGHT COMMUNISM. HE SENT TWO VVV MEMBERS TO RHODESIA TO INVESTIGATE SITUATION BUT WAS UNSATISFIED WITH THEIR REPORT. HE THEN DECIDED TO MAKE PERSONAL TRIP TO RHODESIA WITH ACHESON.

6. BELISARIO CONFIRMED HIS CONTACTS IN SALISBURY WITH AMCIT THOMAS CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GABORO 01269 181902Z

BLEMING AND MEETINGS WITH RHODESIAN SPECIAL BRANCH (PARAS 6 AND 7 REF B). BELISARIO THINKS THAT ONE OF THE RHODESIAN SEPCIAL BRANCH OFFICERS WITH WHOM HE SPOKE, HARRY ELLIOTT, IS AN AMERICAN. BELISARIO STATED THAT HE IS CERTAIN THAT ELLIOTT HAS SPENT A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF TIME IN THE U.S.

7. IN RESPONSE TO CID QUESTIONS ABOUT FUNDING, BELISARIO

REPEATED THAT HE IS WEALTHY, HAD FINANCED HIS AND ACHESON'S TRIP, AND HAD BROUGHT APPROXIMATELY DOLS 8,000 WITH HIM. HE WAS UNABLE TO EXPLAIN TO SB AND CID'S SATISFACTION WHY HE HAD OPENED SEVERAL BANK ACCOUNTS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND HAD GIVEN HIS FRIEND DICK GRASSER A POWER OF ATTORNEY. HE WAS ALSO UNABLE TO DISSUADE SB AND CID'S OBVIOUS BUT UNSTATED SUSPICION THAT HE IS FINANCED BY RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT.

8. BELISARIO STATED THAT HE HAD MADE NUMEROUS INQUIRIES AROUND WASHINGTON REGARDING THE LEGALITY OF JOINING THE RHODESIAN ARMED FORCES. IN ADDITION TO VISITING RHODESIAN INFORMATION OFFICE, BELISARIO CLAIMED TO HAVE TALKED WITH TEMPLE COLE OF AF/S. THIS WAS ONLY POINT DURING BELISARIO'S LONG, RAMBLING NARRATIVE WHERE EMBOFF INTERJECTED, EXPRESSING DISBELIEF THAT COLE WOULD HAVE RECOMMENDED OR APPROVED OF SUCH A PROJECT. AFTER A PAUSE, BELISARIO ADMITTED THAT COLE HAD ADVISED AGAINST AND STRONGLY DISAPPROVED OF ANYONE'S GOING TO RHODESIA, JOINING RHODESIAN ARMED FORCES, OR RECRUITING MERCENARIES. BELISARIO COUNTERED BY SAYING THAT HIS "OTHER FRIENDS" IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT WITH WHOM HE HAD CONSULTED THOUGHT THE PLAN A GOOD IDEA. EMBOFF REQUESTED TO KNOW WITH WHOM IN THE DEPARTMENT BELISARIO HAD SPOKEN, BUT HE WOULD NOT REPLY ON THAT POINT. (COMMENT: GOB IS WELL AWARE OF USG POLICY TOWARD RHODESIAN SITUATION. SB AND CID OFFICERS PRESENT SEEMED TO GIVE NO CREDENCE TO THIS STATEMENT BY BELISARIO AND AFTER MEETING EXPRESSED GOB'S DESIRE TO AVOID ANY EMBARRASSMENT TO USG OVER THIS MATTER).

9 EMBASSY HAS GIVEN NO GUARANTEES TO GOB REGARDING ACHESON AND BELISARIO'S FUTURE BEHAVIOR OR TRAVEL PLANS. HOWEVER, BOTH HAVE EXPRESSED INTENTION TO RETURN DIRECTLY TO U.S. AS SOON AS THEY ARE RELEASED. EMBASSY UNCERTAIN NOW ON RELEASE DATES BECAUSE OF APPARENT COLLAPSE OF " BARGAIN" DESCRIBED CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 GABORO 01269 181902Z

REF A. THE MOST TIME THAT BELISARIO WILL HAVE TO SERVE IS FOUR MONTHS AS TWO MONTHS OF SENTENCE WILL BE SUSPENDED AUTOMATICALLY. ACHESON WILL BETRIED ON TWO ADDITIONAL CHARGES (POSSESSION OF DRUGS AND HOUSEBREAKING IMPLEMENT) IF BELISARIO DOES NOT SATISFY POLICE THAT HE IS TELLING WHOLE STORY.

10. THERE WILL BE CONTINUING INTERROGATIONS WHICH EMBOFF PLANS TO ATTEND IF PRESENCE REQUESTED BY BELISARIO AND POLICE. BOLEHN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DETENTION, WELFARE & WHEREABOUTS, ARRESTS, ALLEGATIONS, MERCENARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975GABOR001269
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750324-0268
From: GABORONE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750936/aaaabgal.tel
Line Count: 164
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 75 GABORONE 1258, 75 GABORONE 1245
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 AUG 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <09 DEC 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVICTED AMCITS -BELISARIO, JOSEPH THOMAS AND ACHESON, CRAIG C.
TAGS: CASC, PFOR, PINS, BC, RH, SA, (BELISARIO, JOSEPH THOMAS), (ACHESON, CRAIG C)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006